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**VDH 05-11**

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**VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SEEKS INPUT FROM MINORITIES  
ON OBESITY PREVENTION**

(RICHMOND, Va.)—The Virginia Department of Health (VDH) is seeking input from minority groups on the problems they face preventing obesity and to solicit effective prevention strategies. The meeting is scheduled for Aug. 10 and 11 at the Holiday Inn Select, 2801 Plank Road in Fredericksburg.

According to a 2003 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention survey, 69.4 percent of African American adults and 56.7 percent of Hispanic adults in Virginia were overweight or obese.

“Obesity is a significant problem among all Virginians, with increased incidence among minority groups,” said Rachael Kennedy, obesity prevention coordinator. “We want to hear the views of minorities so we can effectively address the issues they face.”

This meeting is part of the VDH initiative, CHAMPION, the Commonwealth’s Healthy Approach and Mobilization Plan for Inactivity, Obesity and Nutrition. One of the program’s goals is to develop a strategic plan that will enable communities to combat obesity. Another goal is to compile an electronic resource guide that includes a directory of successful programs. The guide also includes state and community-specific data.

The meeting is an outgrowth of a series of eight similar meetings conducted around the state for the general public and for specific groups, such as public assistance programs and healthcare providers and worksites. While more than 840 individuals participated in those meetings, minority groups were under represented. To attract representatives from Virginia’s minority groups to the August meeting, planners have sent invitations to numerous minority organizations, associations and businesses. Groups working with newly arrived immigrants were also invited. Input from these minority groups will be incorporated in the state’s overall plan to combat obesity.

“We don’t know if the issues minorities face differ significantly from what we have heard in our other meetings,” said Kennedy. “This meeting will help us to know for sure.”

The CHAMPION is a collaborative effort with Governor Mark Warner’s Healthy Virginians initiative, a statewide campaign promoting healthy lifestyles in our workplaces, our schools and among families who receive health care through Medicaid.

You can learn more about CHAMPION, see a meeting agenda and register for the meeting on line by visiting [www.vahealth.org/wic/champion.htm](http://www.vahealth.org/wic/champion.htm).